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WAGON TRAIN TO GEORGIA

Annie Pearce Barnes Johnson
(Mrs. Eugene Thomas Johnson)
3308 Peachtree Road, N. E.
Atlanta 5, Georgia

1961

Historian, Georgia Society Daughters of the
American Colonists

Lineage verified by Membership in:

Daughters of the American Revolution, Atlanta Chapter, through descent from Basil O'Neal, National Number 290816.

Daughters of the American Colonists, James Edward Oglethorpe Chapter through descent from John Briscoe and Daniel Walker, National Number 11260.

Huguenot Society of the Founders of Manakin in Virginia, through descent from Peter Lamar, National Number 1287.

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My Dear Grandchildren:

I've watched you as you sit spellbound looking at your favorite television program "Wagon Train", so I believe you'll like these stories of real people in a real wagon train who were your great, great, and many times great grandmothers and grandfathers. They went west and southwest to Georgia! This was in the early days of our country when there were thirteen colonies along the Atlantic Seaboard. Georgia had been settled only at Savannah, along the coast, on the coastal islands, such as St. Simon's and up the Savannah River to Augusta.

The people in these stories came from Maryland and Virginia to settle along the Little River above Augusta. They were home-loving and God-fearing people who helped in one way or another to build our State of Georgia. I hope you'll enjoy hearing about their "Wagon Train".

With Love to all,

Grandmother

The Grandchildren:

Lawrence Craig Evans, Age 12
Salley Anne Evans, Age 10
Jeb McIver Evans, Age 7
Pace Barnes Pruitt, Age 9
Carolyn Anne Coogler, Age 9
James Bolen Coogler, Age 6
Margaret Neal Coogler, Age 4
Thomas Shelton Johnson, Age 2

BRISCOE - O'NEAL

My favorite story is about Milly (Mary Ellen) Briscoe, who was born in Virginia about 1765, and her husband Basil O'Neal, born in Prince George's Country, Maryland, in 1758. Soon after they were married in Henry County Virginia in 1780 they made the long journey to Georgia with a wagon train. Basil O'Neal fought against the Indians and Great Britain before, during and after the Revolution in Virginia and in Georgia. We know about their lives from a book "A Son of the Revolution" written by the son of Basil O'Neal.

Basil O'Neal's sons dropped the O from their Irish names, when in a wave of patriotism, after the Revolution, many families changed the Irish, the Scottish, the French and the German spelling of their names to what seemed to them all-American names. So our cousins, some of whom still live in the old O'Neal home, are now called Neal.

In 1955 the Georgia Historical Commission placed a bronze marker on Highway 150 Columbia County, Georgia, about twenty five miles from Augusta pointing to the site of "Happy Valley", the Neal home, part of which is the log cabin built by Basil O'Neal soon after 1780. In 1931 the Atlanta Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution placed a Revolutionary marker on the grave of Basil O'Neal in the cemetery not far from the house.

Why did they come from Henry County, Virginia, with the other families from Maryland and Virginia who settled along the Little River in Georgia in the area now known as Wilkes, Lincoln, Columbia and McDuffie Counties?

Their ancestors the Lamars, O'Neals, Briscoes, Swanns, Williamsons and Tarletons had come to Maryland more than a hundred years before the Revolution and settled along the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay in the old parishes or counties: St. Mary's, St. Charles, Calvert, Prince George's. As the families grew the older sons inherited the lands and the younger sons started west in search of new lands. In 1748 many families including the Briscoes went to what became Frederick County, Maryland. Their younger sons crossed the Potomac River into Virginia probably at Shepherd's Ferry at Shepherds town. Here was the crossing for the Great Road. It was one of the wilderness trails that led from Philadelphia through the Shenandoah Valley to the Yadkin River in North Carolina. From here a narrow trading path led through South Carolina to the Savannah River, crossing there at the Broad River into what is now Georgia.

Some of the O'Neals had gone in their boats to Philadelphia from Maryland. There they could buy the Conestoga wagons made in Lancaster County, which they needed for the wagon train. They came down the Great Road to new lands in Southern Virginia.

When the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, Basil O'Neal and his parents were living in Henry County, Virginia. His mothers'name was Mary and his father was Peter Lamar O'Neal, grandson of the Huguenot Peter Lamar. We have a copy of the will of Peter Lamar of Calvert County, Maryland written in 1693. He left property to his daughter Ann, wife of Jo O'Neal, and to his grandson Peter Lamar O'Neal.

In Henry County Virginia on September 20, 1777 Basil O'Neal, Dr. Truman Briscoe, Milly's father and Dr. John Briscoe, Milly's grandfather all signed the oath of allegiance to fight on the side of the thirteen colonies for freedom against Great Britain.

When the colonists had settled earlier along the Great Road in Virginia, the Shawnees, Senecas, Delawares, Cherokees, Tuscaroras and Catawbus were using the wilderness road for their trading path and hunting grounds, so there were frequent Indian raids on the settlers. George Washington at that time lived in the Valley, and he was the leader of Virginia troops who fought with the British in the French and Indian War. Although a treaty of peace was signed in 1763, there was constant warfare with the Indians along the Virginia frontier. The settlers became such excellent woodsmen that the Indians called them "Long Knives". Chief Cornstalk, of the Shawnees, was constantly leading his men in raids, stealings, burnings, murders and massacres.

Now in Georgia the Indians were more friendly. The Creeks and Cherokees signed a treaty in 1773 with Sir James Wright, the governor. For $200,000.00 they sold to Georgia a tract of their land, including what is now Elbert, Wilkes, Hart, Oglethorpe, Lincoln and part of Green, Taliaferro and Madison Counties. Governor Wright established a fort at the junction of the Savannah and Broad Rivers where the Indian trading path leading from the Great Road in Virginia crossed into Georgia. Here at the Land Court, settlers could pay five dollars entrance money for one hundred acres, and buy land for not more than five shillings an acre. Governor Wright had bulletins printed telling of this rich land on easy terms for he wanted good settlers for the Colony. (We saw a copy of the bulletin tacked to the wall at Chowning's Tavern in Williamsburg, Virginia.) These bulletins were sent to the Court Houses in the other colonies and were even tacked to the trees along the wilderness roads.

Immediately many settlers in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina began to make ready the wagon trains to Georgia.

Milly Briscoe and her husband Basil O'Neal were young and in love. They both rode on Pack horses all the way to Georgia. The old women and children and the sick rode in the Conestoga wagons as far as the Yadkin River in North Carolina. There they had to sell the big wagons and use small covered carts along the narrow trail to Georgia. In the carts were bedsteads and feather beds and quilts, each family had a trunk where they had their family Bibles with their clothing. In their Bibles they wrote of the births of new babies, of marriages and deaths and sometimes made records of when they left one colony to travel to another. They had pewter dippers and plates and spoons, bread trays and three-legged stools. Many of the Virginia settlers brought mahogany dressers and chairs, and even good china to eat from.

To cultivate their land each family brought plow points, hoes, mattox, an axe, a broad axe, an anvil, a chisel an auger, etc.

The women brought spinning wheels, cards, and looms to use in making

cloth. They had to prepare for the trip strings of red pepper, pods of dried okra, bags of peas, beans, wheat and corn for planting, and dried apples and peaches, sacks of flour which had been ground in the mills in Virginia. The men had salted and dried deer and bear meat, and they shot wild turkeys, and rabbits and squirrels to eat along the way. They were always happy to find a hollow tree where the bees had deposited honey.

Each family had about fifty head of cattle, several horses, hogs, sheep for wool and a flock of geese for feather beds. They brought corn to feed the stock along the way and flax seed for linen, for little cotton was grown in upper Georgia then. They brought tobacco seed, for that was the main crop at first.

Basil and Milly brought from Virginia various kinds of seedling fruit trees. There were eight varieties of peaches and several kinds of apples including Sweetening and Hoss apples to start their orchard. For over one hundred and fifty years their descendants had a nursery at Happy Valley where they raised apples and peaches from that original stock. Milly had to keep the little trees watered and wrapped against the cold weather on the long journey.

The O'Neals were glad to see hickory trees growing on the new land in Georgia for that indicated good soil. Each of the settlers staked out a home site on a creek with sufficient fall to turn water wheels for grist mills to grind wheat and corn. Each farm had its own distillery and tannery. With the other Maryland and Virginia settlers they choose land near the Little River with a bold spring of good tasting water and a good creek. Basil cleared the land and built a log cabin. Some of the Virginians brought slaves with them but Basil was young and strong and cleared his own land, later he bought slaves to work his crops of cotton and corn and tobacco.

Two of his guns he brought from Virginia were still in the old home in 1914. The musket he used in the Revolution was six feet long, the stock extending the whole length of the barrel, and the load for it was one ball and three buck shot. He called his musket "Buckaneer" because he killed so many deer with it. His old rifle was originally six feet long. It had a broken place on the little end of the stock, caused by a lick on an Indians' head. He was guarding Indians while a treaty was being made and the Indians tried to escape. The break was repaired with a piece of copper wire. Basil could kill a hawk with it while flying, a hundred and fifty yards distant. He helped to forge the barrel of the rifle at a black smith shop in Maryland before he came to Virginia. Later on his son Basil Llewellin Neal, when he entered the Confederate army took with him into service, Basil O'Neal's Revolutionary rifle. He had sixteen inches cut off the barrel and to shorten the stock, and changed the flint lock to a percussion lock.

Basil's guns were constantly at his side. He carried one of them when he plowed his land to plant corn and tobacco, and his fruit trees, for Indian raids became frequent in Georgia in 1780 and almost all of Georgia had fallen to the British except a part of Wilkes County across Little River from the O'Neal land. The Capitol of Georgia had been moved from Augusta to Heard's Fort in Wilkes County. Col. Elijah Clarke sent messengers around to call the settlers to meet at Dennis's Mill on Little River. These home-loving farmers surprised and defeated the British at Kettle Creek in Wilkes

County. This was a turning point in the Revolution in Georgia. In spite of Indian raids and constant devastation by the Tories the British were finally driven out of Georgia and the good news reached the frontier of Cornwallis' surrender to George Washington at Yorktown.

The settlers began to repair the damages the war had brought to them, and replanted their wasted farms.

There was great rejoicing in the home of Basil and Milly O'Neal when their neighbor William Few returned from New York in 1788 with the news that he had signed the Constitution of the United States of America for Georgia, the fourth state to come into the Union.

The O'Neal family was safe in "Happy Valley"

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Historical Markers in Georgia - Georgia Historical Commission. Marker No. 036-2 on Highway 150, Columbia County, Georgia.

Site of Home and Burial Place of Basil Neal, Revolutionary War Soldier.

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Page 26 - A Son of the Revolution - Letter from G. M. Saltzgaber, Commissioner of U. S. Pension Bureau - "in the papers on file in the Bureau it is stated that Basil Neal or O'Neal took the oath of allegiance September 20, 1777, in Henry county, Va., and that he served against the Indians and Great Britain, before, during, and after the Revolution; under David Chadwell in 1778, and under Major John Graves in 1786; and that he served two 3 months' tours in Virginia and one in Georgia."

Historical Marker on Highway 150 - Columbia County - Georgia

BASIL NEAL - SOLDIER OF '76

½ mi.

"Happy Valley," homesite and burial place of Basil Neal, Revolutionary War soldier, lies one-half mile off this highway in the direction the arrow points.

Basil Neal, or O'Neal, was born in Maryland in 1758. When he was 17 years old his family moved to Virginia. There he grew to manhood and married Miss Ellen Briscoe, daughter of an eminent Virginia physician. Her mother was the daughter of Colonel Stuart, of New York, and a granddaughter of Lord Bromfield, of England.

Basil Neal fought heroically against the Indians and the British before, during and after the Revolutionary War. In 1780 he came to Georgia and settled in Columbia County on the same plantation where he later built a larger home and called it "Happy Valley."

After the death of his first wife, who had borne him six children, Basil Neal married Miss Sarah Hull Green, of the Winfield community. She was the daughter of Captain McKeen Green, who also had served in the Revolutionary War under the command of General Nathanael Greene. Six children also were born of the second marriage, including Basil Llewellen Neal, who served in the Confederate Army and is buried near his father.

036-2. GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION 1955.

Ship to:

STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, APPLING, GEORGIA.

Text enclosed in letter from Georgia Historical Commission to Annie Pearce Barnes Johnson (Mrs. Eugene T. Johnson) 1955.

Will of the Huguenot Peter Lemare (Lamar) of Virginia and Maryland

In the Name of God, Amen. That whereas I Peter Lemare, of this County Calvert and province of Maryland, planter, being very sick and weak of body but in good and sound perfect sense and memory, do here make my last will and testament renouncing all other wills before this present item. I give and bequeath my Soul into the hands of Almighty God who gave it me, trusting in and through the merits of Jesus Christ to have free pardon of all My Sins and to have a Joyful Resurrection at the last Day and what worldly estate it hath pleased God to bestow upon me I give and bequeath as followeth. That after my funeral expenses and debts that my moveable estate shall be counted and that it shall be equally divided amongst my loving wife Frances Lemare and my three daughters as namely Ann Lemare, Mary Lemare and Margaret Lemare and that they shall have their equal proportion at the age of sixteen years or on the day of their marriage. I also give and bequeath to my loving wife the Plantation whereon I now live during her natural life and after her decease to be equally divided amongst my three daughters before named, my daughter Margaret to have the first choice. I also give and bequeath unto my grandchild Peter O'Neill that plantation with all the land on the Western side of that branch whereon now Joseph Edwards lives --- and that he shall possess and enjoy the same when he shall attain to the age of one and twenty years, and also that my son-in-law Jo Owneill shall possess the said plantation as soon as Joseph Edward's lease is expired and that he shall enjoy the same till the said Peter Owneill shall come to the age aforesaid. And further I do appoint my good and loveing friends Jo Davis and Joseph Edwards to be my trustees and to execute according to this my last wish and testament. So committing all to the Almighty God I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal this 9th day of October 1693.

Peter Lemare

Sealed signed and delivered in
the Presence of us
Tho F. Person
Francis Dias
Wm. Dabres March the 31st, 1694

Then was the within named will proved by the within named witnesses.

Jo B(illegible)er
Deputy Court Calvert County

Wills 2 --folios 301-302
State of Maryland -- Hall of Records Annapolis
Morris L. Radoff, Archivist - used by permission

Submitted by - Annie Pearce Barnes Johnson (Mrs. Eugene Thomas Johnson)

A Member of the Huguenot Society of the Founders of Manakin in Virginia, through descent from Peter Lamar, National Number 1287.
Georgia Branch.

The Founding of Maryland

by the Ark and Dove Expedition

Milly Briscoe O'Neal and her husband Basil sat before the log fire in their cabin on cold winter nights. As Milly spun flax and wool for their clothing Basil read aloud from the Bible and they had family prayers. There was a baby in the cradle by the fire, then later another until there were six children. One of them, John Briscoe Neal was your great, great, great grandfather.

Milly and Basil had to teach their children at home for there were few schools in upper Georgia in those days. The children liked their history lessons best for they were about their own ancestors.

John Briscoe Neal's favorite was about the first John Briscoe who came to America. He was a doctor or physician, and he was invited by Lord Baltimore to go on a long and perilous journey to America fourteen years after the Pilgrims came to New England in the Mayflower. Lord Baltimore's two ships were called the Ark and the Dove. Some of the Briscoe descendants own the original letter.

Do you know why they came to America? You have read how the Pilgrims came because they were persecuted for their religious beliefs by the Anglican Church, or Church of England. The Roman Catholics were also persecuted, Lord Baltimore became a Catholic, and although the Protestant King James I was his friend he could not remain at Court. The King gave him a grant of land in what was a part of Virginia where he might go and take other settlers who wanted religious freedom.

Accordingly, the plans were made for a new colony. Before the ships set sail, the first Lord Baltimore had died and Leonard Calvert brother of the second Lord Baltimore led the expedition to the new world. There were two hundred settlers aboard the Ark and the Dove. Dr. Briscoe was one of the "twenty gentlemen of very good fashion." The others were laborers and artisans. Not all were Catholics. We believe that Dr. Briscoe was a Protestant because he had married in England, Elizabeth DuBois, a descendant of the Huguenot Marquis de Roussey, and most of his immediate descendants were Protestants. Dr. Briscoe brought herbs and medicines to treat the settlers when they were ill.

In 1634 the two little ships sailed up the Potomac River to St. Mary's river on their right. There the colonists landed at a site they called St. Mary's Town, and they named the new colony Maryland in honor of Henrietta Maria the wife of the new King, Charles I. By 1649 there was a law passed, giving religious freedom in the colony to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The son of Dr. John Briscoe and his wife Elizabeth DuBois was born in the new colony. He was Dr. John Briscoe, Jr. and he had a son Philip, born around 1650 who was a Colonel in the Maryland Militia of St. Mary's County. Philip married Susannah Swann, whose father Samuel Swann was also a Colonel in the Maryland Militia. Philip and Susannah had several children one of whom was Philip, Jr. born 1698 who married Susannah Williamson. Her father Ralph Williamson was Master of

the Ship Charity in the Potomac district. Her mother Anne Tarleton was the daughter of Dr. John Tarleton, Mayor of Lancaster near Liverpool, England. The Tarletons had land in the parish still called Tarleton just north of Liverpool as early as 1381. Several members of the Tarleton family were ship's captains who transported settlers to Maryland and took back cargoes of tobacco to England and Ireland.

One son of Philip Briscoe, Jr. and Susannah Williamson, was another Dr. John Briscoe. He was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland around 1726, and in 1746 married Anne Wood in Trinity Parish, Charles County, Maryland. His second wife was Anne Lamar, who was Basil O'Neals' cousin. This Dr. John Briscoe and his wife Anne Wood had two sons, Dr. Ralph Briscoe and Dr. Truman Briscoe, born 1749, and Dr. Truman Briscoe was Milly's father.

The Briscoes had left Maryland and gone down through the Shenandoah Valley to what was in 1777 Henry County, Virginia. Milly Briscoe was born in Virginia about 1765 and her mother was Anne Stuart, daughter of Col. Stuart of New York and his wife Mary Bromfield, daughter of Lord Bromfield of England.

You remember that Dr. John Briscoe, Dr. Truman Briscoe and Basil O'Neal all took the Oath of Allegiance together in Henry County, Virginia in 1777. Later they all came on the long trip to Georgia with the wagon trains I described. Dr. John Briscoe died in Columbia County, Georgia in 1791 and his son Dr. Truman Briscoe died in Columbia County in 1801, near their grandchildren and other relatives. For other families came on the wagon trains to Georgia from Maryland and Virginia and settled near Basil and Milly. Many of them are also your ancestors: the families of Darsey, Bowdre, Stapler, Sutton, Dennis, Walker, Johns, Barlow, Ray, etc. We'll tell their stories later.

Here is some more about the Briscoes. You know that William the Conqueror came over to England from Normandy (now a part of France) and defeated the English King Harold at the battle of Hastings in 1066. He brought with him a company of free lancers from Brisqua in Suabia. One of these was the first Briscoe in England. The name was then spelled DeBrikskeugh. He was given lands near New Briggin, in Cumberland, near the Scottish border, for his services. He is listed in the Doomsday Book, which was the first census of England under William the Conqueror. This is the line from Lord Robert Brisko a lineal descendant of the Norman Brisko. Allen, whose son Gordon had a son Robert who married Matilda in the time of Edward II, 1313. Their son Isold married Margaret Crofton. From her, as the heir and daughter of Sir John Crofton, the family obtained the present estate of Crofton Hall in Cumberland. Their son Christopher Brisko was taken prisoner at the battle of Wighton. His son Robert married Katherine Skelton of Petrol Wray. Their son John married Tennent daughter of Salzkeld of Corkley. Their son Richard married Elizabeth Leigh daughter of John Leigh, "Ye Leigh of Ishall and Lord of Ye Same". Their son Leonard was the father of Dr. John Briscoe who was born in Cumberland in 1590 and came with the Ark and Dove Expedition to help establish Maryland.

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